Anton Arensky’s String Quartet in A minor, Op. 35, for Violin, Viola, and Two Celli

Miho Zaitsu, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

Date of Degree
9-2016

Document Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
D.M.A.

Program
Music

Advisor
Philip Ewell

Committee Members
Norman Carey
Richard Kramer
Marcy Rosen

Subject Categories
Music Performance | Music Practice

Keywords
Arensky, Anton, string quartet, op. 35, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov

Abstract
My dissertation consists of an in-depth analysis and study of Anton Arensky’s Quartet in A minor, op. 35, for violin, viola, and two celli. It also includes a short biography, a historical background of the work, and an exploration of thematic material. Perhaps the only piece written for this unique combination of instruments, the Quartet in A minor, published in 1894, was written in the months following Tchaikovsky’s death. It was first premiered on January 20, 1894, at the Imperial Music Society, Moscow, in remembrance of Arensky’s great friend and mentor. The unusual instrumentation was a curious attempt to bring out darker string sonorities as a somber requiem to commemorate Tchaikovsky. Although relatively unknown in the United States, Arensky (1861-1906) was one of the most successful composers in imperial Russia. He had an extensive career as a pianist, conductor, and composer, but is best known for teaching some of Russia’s elite composers — Alexander Scriabin and Sergei Rachmaninov — at the Moscow Conservatory, where Arensky was a professor of composition and theory for thirteen years. He left Moscow only upon receiving the prestigious position of music director at the imperial chapel in his hometown of St. Petersburg, a position long held by Mily Balakirev.

Arensky is best known for his miniatures and vocal works, insofar as his beautiful, lyrical thematic material compels the listener to be thoroughly engaged. In the United States, the Piano Trio in D minor, op. 32, written in the same year as the quartet, is probably his most performed work along with the string orchestra arrangement of the second movement of the quartet, Variations on a Theme by Tchaikovsky. Arensky’s publisher

Download

INCLUDED IN
Music Performance Commons, Music Practice Commons

SHARE

Author Corner
Author FAQ
Submission Policies
Submit Work

Links
CUNY Graduate Center
CUNY
was concerned how the atypical quartet instrumentation might affect sales, and convinced Arensky to arrange the piece for standard string quartet soon after its publication. Therefore, both versions bear the same opus number — the original quartet is 35 and the standard quartet is 35a. The string-orchestra arrangement of the second movement, Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky, was also assigned the same opus number as the standard quartet arrangement (op. 35a), and came into fruition after much acclaim and popularity arose for the original quartet, op. 35.

Recommended Citation
https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/1587